

**THE LEGACY  
OF A DYING  
MOTHER.**

**BY**

**THOMAS BROOKS**

## The Legacy of a Dying Mother

To her mourning children, being the experiences of Mrs. Susanna Bell, who died March 13, 1672. With an epistle dedicatory by Thomas Brooks minister of the gospel, London, 1673.

### The Epistle Dedicatory

To his honored friends, and to the children of Mrs. Susanna Bell, deceased; the author wishes all grace, mercy, and peace. My design in this epistle is not to *compliment* you—but to *benefit* you; it is not to tickle your ears—but to better your hearts; nor it is not to emblazon her name or fame to the world, whose heaven-born soul is now at rest with God, and who is swallowed up in those transcendent enjoyments of that other world which are above the comprehensions of my mind and the expressions and praises of my pen—but it is **to allure and draw you to an imitation of what was praiseworthy in her.** Shall I hint at a few things?

**1. First, Imitate her in that SINCERITY and plain-heartedness which was transparent in her.** Sincerity is not a single grace—but the source of all graces, and the virtue which must run through every grace. For what is *faith*—if it is not sincere? And what is *love*—if it is with deception? And what is *repentance*—if it is not in truth? Sincerity is the soul of all grace; it is the grace of all our graces. What advantage is it to have "the breastplate of righteousness, the shield of faith, the helmet of hope," [Eph. 6:13-17](#), if they are but *painted* things? It is the "belt of sincerity" which makes all the other parts of our armor useful. Was she not a true Nathanael, [John 1:47](#), a person in whom there was no deceit—I mean no allowed hypocrisy? and was not this that which carried her through the pangs of death with a great deal of comfort, as it had done Hezekiah, Paul, and other saints before? [Isaiah 38:3](#); [2 Cor. 1:12](#).

A sincere Christian is like the violet, which grows low, and hides itself and its own sweetness as much as it can, with its own leaves; or like Brutus' staff, gold within and thorn without; or like the ark, gold within and goats' hair without. The very heathen loved a plain-hearted and sincere spirit—as he who wished that there was a glass window in his bosom, that all the world might see what was in his heart. But,

**2. Secondly, Imitate her in that HUMILITY which was a grace she was clothed with, 1 Peter 5:5,** "All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." I ever found her low and little in her own eyes, much in debasing herself upon all occasions, looking upon herself as below "the least of mercies," with Jacob, [Gen. 32:10](#); and as "dust and ashes," with Abraham, [Gen. 18:27](#); and as "a poor worm," with David, [Psalm 22:6](#); and "less than the least of all saints," with Paul, [Eph. 3:8](#). The more high in spiritual worth a person is, the more humble in heart that person is. God delights to pour in grace into humble souls, as men pour in liquor into empty vessels. Humility makes a person peaceable among brethren, fruitful in well-doing, cheerful in suffering, and constant in holy walking. Humility makes a man precious in the eyes of God. Whoever is little in his own account, is always great in God's esteem.

It is well observed by some, that those brave creatures, the eagle and the lion, were not offered in sacrifice unto God—but the poor lambs and doves were; to note that God regards not your brave, high, lofty spirits—but poor, meek, and contemptible spirits. Humility is a rare grace. Many, says Augustine, can more easily give all they have to the poor, than themselves become poor in spirit.

Be low in your own eyes, and be content to be low in the eyes of others; and think not of yourselves above what is fit, as ever you would write after your mother's copy, and affect more to be among God's "little ones," [Mat. 18:10](#), than the "great ones of this world." Be humble Christians; as ever you would be holy, be humble. Humility is of the essence of the "new creature." He is not a Christian, who is not humble. The more grace the more humble. Those who have been most high in spiritual worth have always been most humble in heart.

Ignatius could say of himself, "I am not worthy to be called the least." "Lord, I am hell—but you are heaven," said blessed Hooper. "I am a most hypocritical wretch, not worthy that the earth should bear me," said holy Bradford. "I have no other name," says Luther, "than 'sinner'. Sinner is my name, sinner is my surname. This is the name by which I shall be always known. I have sinned, I do sin, I shall sin in infinitum."

*Ruth* was the daughter of the king of Moab, if we may give credit to the general opinion of the Rabbis; yet she accounts herself scarcely equal to one of the maid-servants in the house of Boaz, [Ruth 2:13](#). Just so, *Abigail*, the wit of the time, [1 Sam. 25:41](#). Just so, *Elizabeth*, though she was the elder and the better woman for outward quality—yet how confounded was she with Mary's visit, as being too great a weight of honor for her to bear, [Luke 1:43](#). Just so, Mary, [Luke 1:38](#). "If I were asked," said Austin, "what is the readiest way to attain true happiness, I would answer, the first, the second, the third thing is humility." Humility does not only entitle to happiness—but to the highest degree of happiness, [Mat. 18:4](#). Humility is that Jacob's ladder which reaches from earth to heaven. "Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." [Matthew 18:4](#).

**3. Thirdly, Imitate her in her CHARITY and MERCY towards suffering, needy, and needing ones.** How seldom did you find her ear or hand shut against charitable motions! She knew that those who did good to the poor and needy for Christ's sake, God would most surely do good to them for his Son's sake. She knew that he who promised those "who asked, should have," had first commanded such to give unto those who asked. She knew that unmercifulness is a sin which least befits one who had so largely tasted of the mercies of God, as she had done both in New and Old England. She had much pity and mercy to the poor. The bellies of the hungry, and the back of the naked, did often proclaim her pity and charity. Many ministers, widows, and fatherless ones, have tasted not only of her husband's bounty—but of hers also. Vain people, when they give, they will cause their kindness to run in a visible channel, they will sound a trumpet, to be seen by men, [Mat. 6:1-2](#). But was she not a secret and hidden reliever of God's distressed ones? Did she not refresh the affections of many with her hidden treasures? Will you all learn to write after this copy?

Of Midas it is fabled, "that whatever he touched, he turned into gold." It is most sure that whatever the hand of charity touches it turns into gold—be it but a cup of cold water—nay, into heaven itself. Cold water, having not fuel to heat it; cold water, which costs not the charge of fire to warm it. Salvian says that Christ is *mendicorum maximus*, the greatest beggar in the world, as one who shares in all his saints' necessities, [Heb. 6:10](#); and will never forget the charitable person, the merciful person. Cicero could say, "That to be rich is not to *possess* much—but to *use* much;" and Seneca could rebuke those who so studied to *increase* their wealth, that they forgot to *use* it.

**4. Fourthly, Imitate her in keeping off from the sins and pollutions of the day wherein you live.** Did she not mourn for the abominations of the time? Did not men's abominations in worship and practice—vex, grieve, and wound her poor soul? Was it not her great work to live by no rule, to walk by no rule, to worship

God by no rule—but by that which she dared to die by, and to stand by in the great day of our Lord Jesus? [Ezek. 9:4, 6](#); [Jer. 9:1-2](#); [2 Pet. 2:7-8](#); [Psalm 119:53, 136, 158](#). She knew that worshiping of God in spirit and in truth was the great worship, the only worship which God accepted, [John 4:23-24](#). She did not, she dared not, worship God according to the customs of the world, or the traditions of the elders, [Phil. 3:3](#), or the examples of great men. She knew that that worship which is not according to the word of God, is worshiping of devils. But,

**5. Fifthly, Imitate her in justifying of the Lord under the sharpest, bitterest, and most afflictive providences and dispensations.** How often have I heard her to justify the Lord, even while he has been a-writing bitter things against her; when gall and wormwood has been put into her cup, has she not said with Ezra, chapter 9:13, "God has punished us less than our iniquities deserve!" And with Nehemiah, chapter 9:33, "In all that has happened to us, you have been just; you have acted faithfully, while we did wrong." And with Job, chapter 1:21, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised." And with Daniel, chapter 9:14, "The Lord our God is righteous in all his works which he does."

You know what afflictive providences she has been under, both in respect of her person, and in the loss of her husband, and in those variety of weaknesses which attended her body, and in the great losses that some of you have met with in the world, besides several other exercises. Yet how has she commonly been taken up in blessing of God, and in justifying of God, and also in admiring the goodness of God—that it has been no worse with her. She would not have exchanged her *gains by afflictions*—for all the gains of the world. Stars shine brightest in the darkest *night*. Torches are better for the *beating*. Grapes come not to the wine, until they come to the *press*. Spices smell sweetest when *pounded*. Young trees root the faster for *shaking*. Vines are the better for *bleeding*. Gold looks the brighter for *scouring*. Glow-worms glisten best in the *dark*. Juniper smells sweetest in the *fire*. Aromatic substances become most fragrant with *rubbing*. Such is the condition of God's children; they are the most triumphant when most *distressed*, most glorious when most *afflicted*; as their conflicts, so their conquests; as their tribulations, so their triumphs.

It is fabled that the salamander can live in a fire. God's people are true salamanders, who live best in the furnace of afflictions. Heavy *afflictions* are the best benefactors to heavenly *affections*. When *afflictions* hang heaviest—then *corruptions* hang loosest. And grace which is hidden in nature—as sweet-water in rose-leaves—is then most fragrant when the fire of affliction is put under to distill it out. But,

**6. Sixthly, Imitate her in the standing, bent, and course of her life and conduct.** No man is to judge of the soundness or sincerity of his spirit, by some particular acts—but by the constant frame and bent of his spirit, and by his general conduct in this world. If particular actions might determine whether a man had grace or no grace, whether he were in Christ or not in Christ, whether he were a saint or no saint, whether he were sincere or unsound—we would many times conclude that those have no grace—who indeed have; and that they were not in Christ—who indeed are; and that they are no saints—who indeed are; and that they are not sincere—who certainly are true Nathanaels.

The best saints on this side heaven have had their extravagant motions, and have very foully and sadly miscarried as to *particular* actions, even then when the constant course and bent of their spirits and main of their lives have been God-wards, and Christ-wards, and holiness-wards, and heaven-wards, etc. Witness David's murder and adultery, Noah's drunkenness, Lot's incest, Joseph's swearing, Job's cursing, Jonah's vexing, Peter's denying, and Thomas' not believing. Such *twinklings* do and will accompany the highest and fairest stars. He who walks best,

may be sometimes found resting; the cleanliest person, may sometimes slip into a slough; he who cannot endure to see a spot upon his clothes, may yet sometimes fall into a quagmire. Just so, the holiest and exactest Christians may sometimes be surprised with many infirmities, and unevennesses and sad miscarriages.

Certainly *particular* sinnings are compatible with a gracious heart, though there is no sin in a glorified condition. Our best state on earth is a mixed state, and not absolute holiness. *Glory* annihilates all sinful practices—but *grace* only weakens them. The most sincere Christian is but an imperfect Christian, and has daily cause to mourn over his infirmities, as well as he has cause to bless God for his graces and mercies. Look! as every particular stain does not blemish the universal fineness of the cloth, so neither does this or that particular fall, disprove and deny the general bent of a person's heart or life.

Particulars may not decide the state either way. It is true, a man by a particular sinning is denominated guilty—but by no one particular can a man's state be challenged either to be good or bad. He who shall judge of a Christian's state by particular acts, though very bad, will certainly condemn "the generation of the righteous," [Psalm 73:15](#).

We must always distinguish between some single good actions and a series of good actions. It is not this or that particular good action—but a continued course of holy actions, which denominates a person holy. Certainly as there is no man so *holy*, but sometimes he falls into this or that particular sin; so there is no man so *wicked*, but he falls in with this or that particular duty, as you may see in Pharaoh, Balaam, Saul, the Ninevites, Felix, Herod, Judas, yes, and the very scribes and pharisees. Now look, as every sin which a *godly* man falls into, through infirmity, does not presently denominate him ungodly; so neither will a few good actions done by a *wicked* man prove him godly. It is what the *course* and *tenor* of the life is, which must be most diligently and wisely observed; for every man is as the *course* and *tenor* of the life is. If his course is holy—the man is holy. If his course is wicked—the man is wicked.

There is a maxim in logic, namely, that no general rule can be established upon a particular instance; and there is another maxim in logic, namely, that no particular instance can overthrow a general rule. We are never to make a judgment of our states and conditions by some particular actions, whether they are good or evil—but we are still to make a judgment of our states and conditions by the general frame, bent, and disposition of our hearts, and by the constant tenor of our lives.

Now, I dare appeal to you, and all others who have observed the constant tenor of her life and conduct, whether it has not been such as befits the gospel, and as has adorned the doctrine of God our Savior—human infirmities excepted, [Phil. 1:27](#); [Titus 2:10](#); [Gen. 6:9](#). And Oh, that this might be the mercy of all her children—to walk with God as she has done, and then I would not doubt but that they would all meet in heaven at last. But,

**7. Seventhly, Imitate her in her LOVE to the saints, to all the saints, in whom she could discern anything of Christ.** Did she not love, delight, and take pleasure to see the graces of the Holy Spirit sparkling and shining in the hearts, lives, and lips of the saints? [1 John 3:10, 14](#); secretly wishing in herself that her soul were but in so noble a case. Were there any people in all the world—who were so precious, so lovely, so excellent, and so honorable in her account, in her eye—as those who had the image of God, of Christ, of grace, of holiness, most clearly, most fairly, and most fully stamped upon them? [Psalm 15:1, 4](#), and [16:3](#); [1 John 5:1](#). Did she not love saints as saints? Was it not the image of God which drew out her affection to the people of God?

Grace was lovely in her eye, though clothed with rags. Many love others—because they are advantageous, or powerful, or learned, or of a sweet nature, or affable, or related, or as they have been kind to them—but all this is but natural love. To love others because they are spiritually lovely, because of the seed of God in them, [1 John 3:9](#), because they are all glorious within, [Psalm 45:13](#), is to love them as befits saints, it is to love them at a higher and nobler rate than any hypocrite in the world can reach to.

Did she not set the highest price and the greatest value and esteem upon those who were truly gracious? Had she not an honor in her heart for those who feared the Lord? Did she not value people according to their eternal worth—and not according to their worldly greatness or grandeur? [Proverbs 12:26](#), and [28:6](#). Did she not prefer a holy Job upon a ash-heap, before a wicked Ahab upon the throne? Did she not set a higher price upon a gracious Lazarus, though clothed with rags and full of sores, than upon a rich and wretched Dives, though he were clothed gloriously, and fared sumptuously every day? Was not her love to the saints universal—to one Christian as well as another—to all as well as any—to poor Lazarus as well as to rich Abraham—to a despised Job as well as to an admired David—to an afflicted Joseph as well as to a raised Jacob—to a despised disciple as well as to an exalted apostle? [Phil. 1:21](#); [1 Pet. 2:17](#). Did she not love to see the image and picture of her heavenly Father, though hung in ever so poor a frame, and in ever so poor a cottage? Without all question, he who loves *one* saint for the image of God which is stamped upon him, he cannot but fall in love with *every* saint who bears the lovely image of the Father upon him. And Oh, that this might be all your mercy, to write after this copy that she has set before you! But,

**8. Eighthly, Imitate her in her CONSTANCY in the ways of God, notwithstanding all the hazards, storms, dangers, and troubles which have attended those ways,** especially in these latter days of apostasy, wherein God had cast her lot. She was not a reed shaken with every wind; she was unchangeable in changeable times. Whatever storms beat upon the ways of God, or the people of God, she remained firm and immovable in the ways of the Lord, [Psalm 44](#), and [119:112](#); and doubtless such souls as are truly godly—they will be godly in the worst of *times*, and in the worst of *places*, and among the worst of *people*. Principles of grace and holiness—they are lasting, yes, everlasting. They are not like the morning cloud nor the early dew, [1 John 3:9](#); [Hosea 6:4](#). Let *times* and *places* and *people* be what they will—a sincere Christian will not dishonor his God, nor change his Master, nor quit his ways, nor blemish his profession, nor wound his conscience—to preserve his safety, or to secure his liberty. And was it not thus with her, in the most trying times?

An *upright* man is a holy man. He is one who won't be bowed or bent by the sinful customs or examples of the times and places where he lives, [Gen. 6:9](#); [Rev. 14:4](#), and [3:4](#); [Job 17:9](#). Let the times be ever so dangerous, licentious, superstitious, idolatrous, and erroneous—yet a sincere, plain-hearted Christian will keep his ground, and persevere in his way; as might be made evident by a cloud of witnesses, [Heb. 11](#); [Psalm 125:1-2](#). The laurel keeps its freshness and greenness in the winter season; likewise, a sincere Christian is constant. Let the *wind* and the *world* and the *times* turn which ever way they will—a sincere soul, in the main, will still be the same. He will be like mount Zion, which cannot be removed; he will stand his ground and hold his own under all changes. He is four-square; cast him where you will, like a dice, he always falls always square and sure. Just so, cast a plain-hearted Christian wherever you will, into whatever company you will, and into whatever condition you will—yet still he will fall sure and square for God and godliness. Let the times be ever so sad, and ever so bad—yet a plain-hearted Christian will still keep close to God and his ways, and will rather let all go, than let his God go, or his religion go, or his integrity go.

Jewelers tell us of the Chelydonian stone, that it will retain its virtue and luster no longer than it is enclosed in gold. This is a fit emblem of an unsound heart, who is only good while he is enclosed in golden prosperity, safety, and felicity. An unsound professor, like green timber, shrinks when the sun of persecution shines hot upon him. The heat of fiery trials cools the courage of unsound professors—but a sincere, plain-hearted Christian is like a vessel of solid gold, which keeps its own shape and figure at all *times*, in all *places*, and in all *companies*. When one of the ancient martyrs was greatly threatened by his persecutors, he replied, "There is nothing that I fear; I will stand to my profession of the name of Christ, and contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, come of it what will."

She kept close and constant to the ways of the Lord so long as her natural strength lasted. And Oh, that all you, her children, would make it your business in this, as well as in other things, to write after your mother's copy! remembering that if you are not faithful unto death, you shall never receive a crown of life, [Rev. 2:10](#); and that if you do not continue to the end, that is, in well-doing, you shall never be saved, [Mat. 24:13](#). But,

**9. Ninthly, Imitate her in her high valuations of Jesus Christ.** What low and little things were her own graces, duties, services, and mercies—when she cast her eye upon Christ, when she fell into discourses of Christ! [Phil. 3:8-10](#); [Mat. 13:44](#). Christ was her *summum bonum*—her chief good. What was all the world to her—compared to a sight of Christ, yes, to an hour's communion with Christ! They are not believers, who do not value Jesus Christ above all the world and all things in the world; "for unto everyone who believes he is precious," [1 Pet. 2:7](#). Christ most precious, only precious, and forever precious! They value Christ—

(1.) Above their **lusts**. [Gal. 5:24](#). They can pluck out right eyes for Christ, and cut off right hands for Christ. They value him,

(2.) Above the **world**. Witness David, [Psalm 73:25](#), and [Dan. 6](#); and the disciples, [Mat. 19:27](#); and Moses, [Heb. 11:25-26](#); and the primitive Christians, and the martyrs of a later date. They value him,

(3.) Above their **lives**. [Rev. 12:11](#), "They loved not their lives unto the death." So Paul, [Acts 20:22-24](#), and [21:13](#). Just so, the martyrs. They value him,

(4.) Above all their **relations**. "If all the world were a lump of gold," said the Dutch martyr, "and in my hands to dispose of, I would give it to live all my days with my wife and children in a prison—but Christ and his truth is dearer to me than all." You have thousands of such instances upon record. They value him,

(5.) Above their **goods**. [Heb. 10:34](#), "You joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property." So have many thousands since under sharp persecutions. They value him,

(6.) Above all natural, spiritual, and acquired **excellencies**. [Phil. 3:7-8](#). In all my serious discourses with her about our Lord Jesus Christ, she would still set the crown upon Christ's head. She would lay herself low, very low, that he alone might be exalted. The thoughts of Christ were precious to her, the discourses of Christ were precious to her, the image of Christ was precious to her, the ordinances of Christ were precious to her, the discoveries of Christ were precious to her, the day of Christ was precious to her, the offices of Christ were precious to her, and the rebukes of Christ—while she enjoyed his presence under them—was precious to her—but, above all, the person of Christ was most precious to her. In her eye he was "the chief of ten thousand, fairer than the children of men," [Cant. 5:10](#); [Psalm 45:1](#); and all the riches, honors, pleasures, and delights of the world were but dung in comparison to him, [Phil. 3:7-8](#).

Oh at what a rate have the saints of old prized our Lord Jesus! Luther had rather fall with Christ than stand with Caesar. The same author elsewhere says that he had rather be a Christian clown than a pagan emperor. Emperor Theodosius professed that he had rather be a saint and no king, than a king and no saint. Constantine rejoiced more in being the servant of Christ, than in being the emperor of the world. Bernard says "that he had rather be in his chimney-corner with Christ, than in heaven without him." It was an excellent answer of one of the martyrs when he was offered riches and honors if he would recant, "If you can offer me something that is better than my Lord Jesus Christ—I will consider it." Another godly man cried out, "I had rather have one Christ than a thousand worlds." I have read of Johannes Mollius, that whenever he spoke of the name of Jesus, his eyes dropped tears. Another godly man, who, being in a deep muse after some discourse of dear Jesus, and tears trickling down his cheeks before he was aware, and being asked the reason of it, he sincerely confessed, "It was because he could not draw his dull heart to prize Jesus Christ at that rate he deserved." *Christ lay near your mother's heart*, and Oh, that he may be near all your hearts, so that you may be safe and saved forever  
But,

**10. Tenthly, Imitate her in the casting a mantle of love over the infirmities and weaknesses of poor, weak, miscarrying Christians, in the burying of Christians' weaknesses under their graces.** Much I know of this—but some know much more. She was not for the exposing of other people's weaknesses, whether they were nearer to her or more remote from her. She commonly carried a mantle of love about her to cast over other men's sins; she seemed to live under the power of that word, [Proverbs 10:12](#), "Love covers all sins" and that [1 Pet. 4:8](#), "Love covers over a multitude of sins." By covering must be meant

- (1.) A favorable construction of all things, which in right reason might well be construed;
- (2.) A passing by smaller infirmities and private offences;
- (3.) Such a covering as might cure also, for love is wise.

Love has a large mantle, and covers all sins—that is, all private sins, and all such sins as may be concealed with a good conscience both towards God and towards men. Again, it must be understood, not of our own transgressions committed against God—but of other men's sins and transgressions committed against us. Love is not suspicious—but interprets all things in the best sense, [Proverbs 17:9](#). Love will not publish private injuries, to the dishonor or shame of the offending party. [Proverbs 12:6](#), "A fool shows his annoyance at once, but a prudent man overlooks an insult." "To observe and take notice of other men's faults—but not of our own, is the easiest thing in the world!" said Thales. Those who are best acquainted with *other* men's infirmities, are usually least observant of their *own* iniquities and irregularities. "The nature of man is very apt," says Seneca, "to use a magnifying glass to behold other men's faults, rather than a mirror to behold their own faults." Erasmus speaks of one who collected all the lame and defective verses in Homer's works—but passed over all that was excellent. The Donatists of old were more glad to find a fault than to see it amended, and to proclaim it than to cover it; to carp at it than to cure it. "If I should find a bishop committing adultery," says Constantine, "I would cover that foul fact with my imperial robe rather than it should come abroad to the scandal of the weak, and the scorn of the wicked."

Men are more apt to expose and vilify other men's faults, than their own. Observable is that saying of our blessed Savior: [Luke 7:37](#), "When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume. . ." We may guess both who the woman was, and what her sin was—but Jesus neither names the sin, nor the sinner.



Seeing her reformation, he protects her reputation. Oh, that you would all labor to write after this copy. When Alexander was painted, the painter painted his finger over his wart. Apelles covered Venus' mole with his finger, that it might not be seen. I wish that you would lay your fingers upon one another's warts and moles, and not emblazon other's human frailties and infirmities to the world—but love and live as brethren and sisters who are never without a *mantle of love* to cover infirmities—I say not enormities; to cover weaknesses—I say not wickedness; to cover from the world—I say not from God nor from one another. But,

**11. Eleventhly, Imitate her in her earnest desires and endeavors that others, especially that her nearest and dearest relations, might taste that the Lord is gracious;** that they might all be holy and happy, gracious and glorious; that they might all have changed hearts, renewed natures, and sanctified souls; that they might all be born again, adorned with grace, filled with the Spirit, and fitted for heaven.

You know that upon her dying-bed, she desired that when she was asleep in Jesus, [1 Thes. 4:14](#), that I would, for the advantage of the living, especially for your sakes, who lay nearest her heart, preach on [Psalm 34:8](#), "Oh taste and see that the Lord is gracious," which accordingly I did three times. Now what was her design in this—but that everyone of you might share with her in the same favor, love, spirit, grace, merit, righteousness, and goodness that her soul had long tasted of? There is not a soul that ever has had any saving taste of the Lord and of his goodness—but is mightily desirous that others should taste of the same grace and goodness. "Oh taste and see that the Lord is good;" as if David should have said, I for my part have seen, tasted, and experienced much of God and his goodness, and never more than in my greatest straits. I am loath to eat these heavenly viands and soul-ravishing morsels of contentment alone. "Come and listen, all you who fear God, and I will tell you what God has done for my soul." [This verse not only imparts an invitation—but the *affection* also of him who speaks.] "Come, oh come, poor souls! taste and see with me how good the Lord is; how comfortable the embraces of Christ are, and how sweet communion with heaven is!"

We cannot advantage others more than by declaring and communicating unto them our soul-secrets, our soul-experiences. All the saints own it as their duty to glorify God in their generation: and wherein can they bring more glory to God than in helping souls to heaven? and how can they find out a readier way to effect this great business, than by telling them what God has done for their souls, than by making a faithful narrative of their own conditions by *nature* and by *grace*, when and how the goodness of the Lord was made known unto them, in a saving way. Oh tell poor wounded sinners what methods of mercy the Lord used to the healing of your wounds and to the quieting of your consciences, so that they may be encouraged to a serious use of all gospel means, and to a hope of the same grace and goodness of the Lord towards them. Oh labor more and more to convince others by your experiences, that grace is the only way to glory, and that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord," [Heb. 12:14](#).

*Paul* had tasted that the Lord was good, and he wished that both *Agrippa* and all who heard him "may become what I am, except for these chains." [Acts 26:29](#). As soon as *Matthew* had tasted that the Lord was good, [Luke 5:29](#), he called together a huge multitude to meet at his house. As soon as *Philip* had tasted of the sweetness of communion with Christ, he runs to *Nathanael* to invite him to Christ, saying, "Come and see!" [John 1:45-46](#). No sooner had the *woman of Samaria* tasted of Christ's living waters—but she leaves her water-pot, and hastens into the city to call out her friends and neighbors to see and taste how good dear Jesus was, [John 4:28](#). Just so, those young converts, [Zech. 8:21](#), "And the inhabitants of one city will go to another and say—Let us go at once to entreat the Lord and seek the Lord Almighty. I myself am going." [Micah 4:2](#), "Come, let us go up to the mountain of

the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." Oh blessed frame of spirit!

O my friends, it is the nature of true grace to be *diffusive* and *communicative*. Grace cannot be concealed. Those who have tasted of divine sweetness cannot choose but speak of it to others; their hearts, like bottles of new wine, would be ready to burst—if they had not vent. Grace is like fire in the bones. Those who have it cannot hide it. All the faculties of the soul, and all the members of the body will still be a-telling to others, that there is a treasure of grace in the soul. The blind men who were cured were charged to be silent—but they could not hold their peace. Just so, here. "We therefore learn—that we may teach," is a proverb among the Rabbis. "I lay in and lay up," says the heathen, "that I may draw forth again and lay out for the good of many." And shall not grace do as much as nature? shall not grace do more than nature?

Well, friends, this I shall only say, that the frequent counsels that your glorified mother has given you to taste of divine goodness, and the experiences that she has communicated to you of her taste of divine goodness, both in her health and sickness, both in her living and dying—will certainly either be for you, or else be a dreadful witness against you in the great day of our Lord Jesus! Oh remember not only those experiences of hers which are now presented to your eyes—but those other experiences of hers as to her inward man, which have often sounded in your ears. But,

## **12. Lastly, Labor to imitate her in her comfortable passage out of this world.**

Those words were more worth than a world, which she uttered a little before she fell asleep in the Lord, namely, "Lord, take my aching head—and lay it in your bosom!" How often did she express her longings to be with Christ, that she might neither sin nor sorrow any more! Her outward man was full of pain, weakness, and trouble—yet how was her inward man refreshed and quieted in a way of believing, according to that blessed word, [Isaiah 26:3](#), "You will keep him in perfect peace;" the Hebrew runs, *shalom, shalom*, peace, peace; "whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you." Never did the espoused *maiden* long more for the marriage-day; nor the *apprentice* for his freedom; nor the *captive* for his ransom; nor the *condemned* man for his pardon; nor the *traveler* for his inn; nor the *mariner* for his haven; nor the *sick* man for his health; nor the *wounded* man for his cure; nor the *hungry* man for his bread; nor the *naked* for clothes—than she longed to die, and to be with Christ, which for her was best of all! [Phil. 1:23](#). [In all my visits to her, my hardest task was still to work her into a willingness to stay in this world until all her doing and her suffering work was over.]

How often were those words in her mouth, [Rev. 22:20](#), "Come, Lord Jesus—come quickly!" The *face* of none is so lovely to the saint's eye, the *voice* of none so lovely to his ears, the *taste* of none so pleasant in his mouth—as Jesus Christ. "The name of Jesus has a thousand treasures of joy and comfort in it," says Chrysostom. Paul speaks of Christ some five hundred times, as some have reckoned. "The name of the Savior," says Bernard, "is honey in the mouth, music in the ear, and a jubilee in the heart!" And how often was that blessed word in her mouth, "Remember, O Lord, I beseech you, how I have walked before you in truth, and with a perfect heart; and have done that which is good in your sight," [Isaiah 38:3](#). A serious sense of her uprightness in the main, of her walking with God, did yield her more than a little sweetness and comfort when she was upon her bed of pain.

One of the last speeches of a dying upright Christian was this, "Satan may as well pluck God out of heaven, as pluck my soul out of his keeping," [John 10:28-30](#); [2 Tim. 2:12](#). She "knew him in whom she had believed, and was persuaded that he was able to keep that soul she had committed to him, against that day." A child who has any precious jewel given him cannot better secure it than by putting it into his

father's hands to keep; so neither can we better provide for our souls' safety than by committing them to God. "Keep that which I have committed;" that is, either my precious soul, which I have committed to his care and custody, to bring it forth glorious at that day of his appearing; or my eternal life, happiness, and crown of glory, which I have, as it were, deposited with him by faith and hope. In short, he committed to God—his soul, himself, his doings, his sufferings, to be rewarded with life and salvation; and so did she who is now at rest in the Lord.

"Lord," says Austin, "I desire to die that I may see Christ—and enjoy him. I refuse to live, that I may live with Christ." The broken rings, contracts, and espousals, do not content the true lover—but he longs for the marriage-day; and so did she who has now exchanged a sickbed for a royal throne, and the company of poor mortals for the presence of God and Christ! It was well said by one, "So far as we tremble at death, so far we lack love to God." It is sad, when the contract is made between Christ and a Christian, to see a Christian afraid of consummating the marriage. But your deceased relation was no such Christian. I know nothing in this world that her heart was so much set upon, as the completing of the marriage between Christ and her soul.

My eye is upon that text, "The righteous perish, and no one ponders it in his heart; devout men are taken away, and no one understands that the righteous are taken away to be spared from evil. Those who walk uprightly enter into peace; they find rest as they lie in death." [Isaiah 57:1-2](#).

I have read of one Philo, a Jew, and another—that when they came to any city or town, and heard of the death of any godly man, though ever so poor, they would both of them mourn exceedingly, because of the great loss that place had by the death of that godly man, and because it was a warning from God of evil approaching. But ah, how many godly ministers, and how many choice Christians, has the Lord Almighty taken away from us—and yet who lays it to heart! There is no greater prognostic of an approaching storm, than God's calling home so many worthies, "of whom the world was not worthy," as he has lately done.

Now Oh, that God would beautify all your souls with all these twelve jewels, with which your mother was adorned in life and death!